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MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant for Operations, NPIC

FROM: Chief, Imagery Analysis Division, CIA

SUBJECT: Comments on [redacted]
The Use of Satellites in Crisis Situations

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1. The subject paper, although vague and ill-defined in some areas, is a worthwhile "think piece" which highlights important problems of concern to all involved in the collection or exploitation of intelligence from satellite reconnaissance systems. It highlights the importance of timing and quality (or resolution) but also stresses the need for the analytical process to extract meaningful estimates from raw data. NPIC has had a very real part to play in this process in past crises - [redacted] Cuba, for example.

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2. Of importance also are the variables mentioned: the variety of targets and the variety of sources of information. We endorse the need for specialists with all-source information at their disposal, and in fact this has been a guiding principle of the Center from its inception. Another factor mentioned here is the necessity of estimating "the enemy's view of the possible effectiveness". This point is the most important point in the paper as it is this estimate which will determine whether meaningful indicators can be imaged on sensors. Unfortunately it is the one aspect of future development over which we have little, if any, control.

3. With regard to the two major types of crises defined, (1) observation of crisis locale and (2) detection of indications of initiation of military actions, we felt that these need to be defined further. However, the elements discussed such as the size of the area or action involved and timing of the reconnaissance would seem to apply in both types of crises. Likewise - resolution, scale, weather, lighting and terrain would be reconnaissance considerations in most crisis situations. [redacted]

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4. It is agreed that planning is appropriate now for the following considerations during any future crisis situation:

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5. The concept of a change detection machine (mentioned in the subject paper) has already been tested to some extent and appears to be technically feasible but of questionable value because of the inability of machines to discriminate between changes of significance and incidental changes which are frequently more prominent. This method might have greater application with sensors other than photographic.

6. Equipment and methodology must be devised to cope with the large inputs and short response times in the future. However, it is important to remember that the essential element in any crisis situation has always been people, and therefore it is paramount that we develop a cadre of highly skilled people who can adapt to a variety of situations and use all sources available in the exploitation of reconnaissance materials.

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